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ABSTRACT

This book chapter explores the integration of two basic premises: (1) education in the United States will always be changing, and (2) school psychologists have fundamental expertise that will always be necessary regardless of changes in schools. Some changes in U.S. education are: school reform and organizational changes; special education reform; school health care services; increased diversity in student populations; school safety; financial cutbacks and downsizing; and implementation of state and national standards such as Goals 2000. Areas of expertise in school psychology that transcend the changes in education are found in the mini-series topics in one of the major journals in school psychology, "School Psychology Review." Topics are: (1) assessment; (2) consultation for educators and parents; (3) addressing the needs of diverse student populations; and (4) application of research to educational practices and policy. Eight guidelines to promote flexibility and growth in school psychology so that school psychologists remain indispensable professionals are presented. One table lists selected topics of mini-series and thematic issues in "School Psychology Digest" and "School Psychology Review." (JBJ)

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Chapter Ten

Enduring Expertise of School Psychologists and the Changing Demands of Schools in the United States

Patti L. Harrison

This chapter explores the integration of two basic premises: Education in the United States will always be changing, and school psychologists have fundamental expertise that will always be necessary, regardless of changes in schools. The chapter includes a description of some of the many changes in U.S. education and a summary of the basic areas of expertise in school psychology that transcend the changes in education. The chapter concludes with guidelines to promote flexibility and growth in school psychology so that school psychologists remain indispensable professionals providing unique, important services in the constantly changing schools of the United States.

Past, Present, and Future of Education in the United States

Education in the United States has never been static and is characterized by its continuous changes. The history of American education is replete with examples of changes that affected the type and quality of instruction and other services provided to students and that impacted the field of school psychology (Fagan & Wise, 1994). For example, many of these changes were related to the characteristics of the school population. Our schools have been affected by the immigration of large number of families from other countries and the movement of families from rural to urban settings and urban to suburban settings during various times in the history of our country. Significant changes in the student population of our schools occurred when compulsory attendance laws were enacted and enforced. The U.S. student population changed when children with disabilities were assured a free and appropriate public education in federal legislation in 1975. Some historical changes in our schools resulted from concerns about the skills of students and the need for school accountability. Concerns about students' capability in math and science during the Sputnik era and concerns about basic literacy and academic skills in the 1970s and 1980s led to changes in educational services and development of assessment techniques for measuring students' skills. There are numerous other examples of changes in schools related to a multitude of historical political, demographic, social, and financial events in our country.

The past, present, and future of our schools will, without a doubt, have one strong feature in common: Numerous issues and changes have been and will continue to be an integral part of American education. The following list describes just a few current and emerging trends in our education system that could affect the profession of school psychology (see DeMers, 1995; Furlong & Morrison, 1994; Knoff & Curtis, in press; and

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National Association of School Psychologists, 1994, for additional discussion about some of these trends):

(a) school reform and organizational changes,
(b) special education reform,
(c) school health care services,
(d) increased diversity in student populations,
(e) school safety,
(f) financial cutbacks and downsizing, and
(g) implementation of state and national standards, such as Goals 2000.

Basic Expertise of School Psychologists

Throughout its history, school psychology has been associated with a number of fundamental roles and areas of expertise. An illustration of the enduring nature of the expertise of school psychologists is found in the mini-series topics of one of the major journals in school psychology, *School Psychology Review*. *School Psychology Review* is now in its 25th year of publication, and several issues each year are devoted to mini-series, or themes. Table 1 contains selected mini-series topics from the past 25 years of publication of *School Psychology Review*. The diverse topics listed in Table 1 mirror some of the historical changes in education, described in the preceding section of this article. The mini-series topics also identify several basic areas of expertise in school psychology that seem to be required in schools, regardless of political, social, demographic, or financial factors of the time. For example, some topics, such as affective education and SOMPA (System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment) seem to be unique to a particular time in the history of education and in the history of school psychology. Other topics, such as family involvement, assessment, and diversity in student populations remain important, constant considerations.

The mini-series topics in *School Psychology Review*, as well as many other resources (e.g., Fagan & Wise, 1994; NASP, 1994; Reschly & Ysseldyke, 1995) identify several fundamental, enduring areas of expertise in school psychology that appear to be necessary regardless of the changes going on in schools. These areas are unique to the profession of school psychology; no other school-based profession has comparable expertise in these areas. These fundamental areas of expertise are described below.

Assessment. Historically, school psychologists have been identified as "assessment experts"(NASP, 1994). Although there has been much concern about the large amounts of times school psychologists devote to assessment for determination of special education eligibility (Wilson & Reschly, 1996), school psychologists have broad knowledge and expertise in assessment of children's learning and development that can be applied in many contexts in general and special education. For example, most states require some form of group achievement test across many grades in order to determine if basic competencies are being met and in order to evaluate school progress. Many school districts are incorporating more authentic forms of assessment, such as performance-assessment and portfolio assessment, into their traditional testing programs. With their extensive training in the principles of administration and interpretation of assessment techniques, school psychologists typically have more expertise in assessment than any other professionals in schools. Thus, school psychologists can make many contributions to assessment in schools beyond special education assessment.

School psychologists have expertise in providing a wide variety of intervention and prevention techniques for students experiencing learning and behavior problems. Although school psychologists' experience with providing interventions have often been tied to their roles in special education assessment, school

psychologists effectively provide behavioral, cognitive, and academic interventions that can applied to students experiencing problems across regular and special education and with variety of learning, mental health, and physical health-related problems. School psychologists have expertise in using assessment techniques to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. In addition, school psychologists contribute to system and organization prevention and intervention efforts, as well as to services for individual students and groups of students.

Consultation for educators and parents. School psychologists have many skills in providing consultation for other professionals and parents, especially as they relate to providing services for children experiencing problems. A variety of school psychological services relate to consultation, including communication of information to educators and parents, collaborative problem-solving, team decision-making, and organization or system-wide analysis and planning. As with interventions, the consultation expertise of school psychologists can be applied to general and special education setting and across a variety of academic, mental health, and physical health-related problems.

Addressing needs of diverse student populations. School psychologists have substantial training and experience in addressing the many needs of diverse learners. School psychologists have gained experience in working with students across different levels of ability, with a variety of disabilities and mental and physical problems, and from all ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds groups. School psychologists' training in diversity, especially training in how diversity relates to children's learning and the influence of different contexts on children's development, leads them to consider a multiplicity of factors when addressing any individual student's needs.

Application of research to educational practices and policy. School psychologists have extensive training and knowledge related to theory and research in human learning and development. With their significant knowledge base about theory and research findings, school psychologists often serve as the primary professionals in schools who provide information about applying research to educational practices and policy. In addition, school psychologists' training in research techniques and tools of scientific inquiry is invaluable in development and evaluation of school-based programs.

Integrating the Changing Demands of Schools with School Psychologists' Enduring Expertise

This chapter has described possible changes in school of the United States and the areas of expertise that are unique to the profession of school psychology and that will endure, regardless of those changes. The following suggestions are offered as possible ways to ensure that school psychologists and the field of school psychology capitalize on these fundamental areas of expertise—in other words, the "strengths" of school psychologists—in today's school and in schools in the future.

1. We should focus less on redefining the field of school psychology and renaming the profession and focus more on acknowledging the significant expertise in school psychology and identifying how this expertise can address changing schools.
2. We should embrace all areas of expertise of school psychologists and avoid emphasizing one role over another or suggesting replacement of a "traditional" role (e.g., assessment, counseling) with "alternative" roles (e.g., intervention, consultation).
3. Margaret Dawson asked the following question in a 1994 *School Psychology*

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Review article on the future of school psychology, "Can school psychologists get beyond the bureaucracy in schools to do things that really matter?" (p. 601). Yes, they can! School psychologists should identify specific activities and effective practices that transcend the bureaucratic, political, social, demographic, financial, and many other changes affecting schools.

4. We should identify methods to communicate our expertise to educators, parents, policy makers, and the media. The educational community still has a surprising lack of knowledge about school psychology and the many services school psychologists can provide in schools.
5. We should recognize the importance and unique roles of all professionals in schools and work with other professionals to integrate services and take advantage of each professions contributions.
6. We should identify areas of expertise and roles in school psychology that can be utilized across a number of different educational models or service delivery systems. For example, we should not solely tie our services to one model or to one system of service delivery, such as a special education model or even a reformed school model or health-care model. Our expertise can be used across all models, and over-identification with one specific model could reduce our flexibility in responding to future new models.
7. We should continue to ensure that all school psychologists have fundamental skills and expertise needed in our changing schools. American Psychological Association (APA) accreditation and National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) approval of school psychology programs promote high-quality graduate training and the attainment of important knowledge and expertise. NASP and APA standards for credentialing and continuing education, and their subsequent adoption by many state credentialing agencies, have resulted in school psychologists' greater expertise upon initial entry into the profession and life-long learning throughout their careers.
8. Instead of simply adapting to changes in schools after they happen, we should be leaders in predicting and planning for the changes at the national, state, local, and building levels. Because school psychologists are indispensable in schools, we must continue to be indispensable as active, influential participants in school changes.

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Table 1
Selected Topics of Mini-Series and Thematic Issues in *School Psychology Digest* and *School Psychology Review*

Topic	Guest Editor(s)	Date
Affective Education	Stuart N. Hart	1978, Vol. 7, No. 2
Consultation	Susan Kupisch	1978, Vol. 7, No. 3
SOMPA: A Symposium	None	1979, Vol. 8, No. 1
Behavior Disorders	Harvey F. Clarizo	1979, Vol. 8, No. 4
Behavioral Assessment	Harold Keller	1980, Vol. 9, No. 1
The Larry P. Decision	David P. Prasse	1980, Vol. 9, No. 2
Families/Parental Involvement	Sylvia Shellenberger	1981, Vol. 10, No. 1
Neuropsychology	George W. Hynd	1981, Vol. 10, No. 3
Cognitive-Behavior Interventions	George W. Hynd	1982, Vol. 11, No. 1
High School Services	Richard J. Nagle and Frederic J. Medway	1982, Vol. 11, No. 4
Multidisciplinary Teams	Charles A. Maher and Steven J. Pfeiffer	1983, Vol. 12, No. 2
Projective Assessment	Howard M. Knoff	1983, Vol. 12, No. 4
Behavioral Health	Herbert H. Severson and Sylvia Shellenberger	1984, Vol. 13, No. 2
Computers in School Psychology	C. Sue McCullough and L. Stanley Wenck	1984, Vol. 13, No. 4
Developmental Disabilities	Michael D. Powers and Sandra L. Harris	1985, Vol. 14, No. 2
Rural School Psychology	Jan Hughes and Thomas K. Fagan	1985, Vol. 14, No. 4
Linking Assessment/Instruction	Lynn S. Fuchs and Douglas Fuchs	1986, Vol. 15, No. 3
Indirect Service Delivery	Jane Close Conoley	1986, Vol. 15, No. 4

Psychological Maltreatment	Stuart Hart and Marla R. Brassard	1987, Vol. 16, No. 2
Research Methodology	Joseph C. Witt	1987, Vol. 16, No. 3
School Psychologists/Non-Traditional Settings	Steven Pfeiffer and Raymond Dean	1988, Vol. 17, No. 3
Primary Prevention	Joseph Zins and Susan G. Forman	1988, Vol. 17, No. 4
Curriculum-Based Assessment	Sylvia Rosenfield and Mark Shinn	1989, Vol. 18, No. 3
Communication Disorders	Cathy F. Telzrow	1989, Vol. 18, No. 4
Internalizing Disorders	William M. Reynolds	1990, Vol. 18, No. 2
Rational-Emotive Therapy	Michael E. Bernard and Raymond Diguiseppe	1990, Vol. 19, No. 3
Attention-Deficit Disorders	Phyllis Anne Teeter	1991, Vol. 20, No. 2
Children's Rights	Stuart N. Hart and David P. Prasse	1991, Vol. 20, No. 3
Social Functioning and Learning Disabilities	Sharon Vaughn	1992, Vol. 21, No. 3
Needs of African-American and Spanish-Speaking Students	Sharon-Ann Gopaul-McNicol	1992, Vol. 21, No. 4
Pharmacological Treatments	William E. Pelham	1993, Vol. 22, No. 2
Writing Disabilities	Virginia W. Berninger and Stephen R. Hooper	1993, Vol. 22, No. 4
School Violence	Michael J. Furlong and Gale Morrison	1994, Vol. 23, No. 2
Educational Tools for Diverse Learners	Douglas Carnine	1994, Vol. 23, No. 3
Health-Related Issues	LeAdelle Phelps and Steven Landau	1995, Vol. 24, No. 2
Reading Instruction	P. G. Aaron	1995, Vol. 24, No. 3
DSM-IV	Thomas J. Power and George J. DuPaul	1996, Vol. 25, No. 3
Organization Change and School Reform	Howard M. Knoff and Michael J. Curtis	1996, Vol. 25, No. 4